

Perception of Abortion in Indonesian and American Cultures
Reflected in Indonesian and American Dramas

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Abstract

The drama "Keely and Du" by Jane Martin and "Abortion" by Subrata Kalape are the representation of life. Although the dramas talk about abortion, they represent a different message. This paper aims to discuss the different perceptions of abortion based on both dramas. The authors used a qualitative approach and a comparative study to compare the contents and dialogues between the two dramas. The result of this study shows the different perception of abortion in America and Indonesia. This finding indicates that cross cultural understanding is important to understand the cultural differences in America and Indonesia.

Keyword: Drama, Abortion, Culture, Perception, America, Indonesia

I. Introduction

Abortions a common thing in society. Abortion is the removal or expulsion of an embryo or fetus from uterus, resulting in or caused by its death. It is the termination of pregnancy which is not an easy topic to be discussed. It is an issue which is always be a matter of debates because it is related to religion, moral, law, and so forth. Pros and contras still surround the public opinion when discussing this issue.

There have been an increasing number of abortion cases throughout the world. Every country has different preception of abortion. The countries, such as the United States of America, Germany, and Republic of China permit abortion for some reasons. Unlike the United States of America, there are many countries which prohibit abortion, for instance Vatican, El Savador, Chilli, and Indonesia. These have been fuelled by many factors, such as culture.

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Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society (Tylor, 1871). In Indonesia, culture refers to the societal norms. Like America, Indonesian culture is heavily influenced by religion during its early development, but it is heavily influenced by the harvesting of rice. In general, Indonesian culture is less of a distinction between secular society and religious philosophy than in America (Zimmermann, 2017). Culture is not only about customs, but also the habits which are performed repeatedly by the people in a country would be a culture.

The main focus of this study is to know the different perception and the impacts of abortion in Indonesia and America. The project can be used to understand the difference of cultures between Indonesia and America which give effect to abortion impacts in both countries. Some perception and assumption were made as a consideration of a proper and realistic design.

So far, there have been some studies discussing abortion in America. Harper (2005), for example, studied that abortion was first made legal throughout America in 1973, so that there were 16.3 abortions per 1000 women aged 15–44 which then increased to 29.3 in 1982. Since abortion was legalized in America, deaths and morbidity caused by abortion experienced a steep and rapid decline in 1973 (Strauss, 2001). While in Indonesia, a study by Bedner (2001) discussed that abortion is forbidden in legal view in Indonesia. Kusmaryanto (2002) noted that there were 3 million cases of abortion per year in 2002. An abortion is basically based on the law of each country which regulates the case (Tanuwijaya, 2014). The discussion of abortion based on literary work has never been studied by researchers. Therefore, the authors are interested in discussing the abortion in America and that in Indonesia based on drama “Keely and Du” by Jane Martin and “Aborsi” by Subrata Kalape.

Issues in a country can be influenced by many things, some of them are the religion, customs, and culture factors as well as abortion. The perception of abortion in

Indonesia and America are different due to the differences of the society's mindset influenced by religion, customs, and culture. Abortion problem written in this study is related to society and culture. Therefore, the authors use sociocultural theory.

Abortion is one of life's problems in many countries. The problem of abortion brought into an American literary work entitled "Keely and Du" by Jane Martin and an Indonesian theatrical entitled "Aborsi" by Subrata Kalape. The American drama gives preception about how abortion is permitted in America, on the contrary of Indonesian drama. It means that literary work can be a representation of life. Abortion is one of the most sensitive issues in Indonesia. It is proved by the scarcity of literary works which the society has made about abortion. The literary works bring abortion only as a supporting issue or as an insertion. In this research, we know that there are different preception of abortion effected by cultural differences.

II. Research Method

The approach used in this research is qualitative approach. The qualitative approach results are obtained through library research from the previous studies of abortion. While the authors use close-viewing and comparative study as the methods of the research. The literary works on drama "Keely and Du" and "Aborsi" drama show the different preception of abortion which exist in America and Indonesia, so the approach and the method are used to reach the aim by analyzing dan comparing both dramas based on American and Indonesian cultures.

The authors did the research by analyzing the dramas "Keely and Du" and "Aborsi" using qualitative approach. By analyzing the dramas, we know the extrinsic elements to know the issues happening in each country for drama is the literary work which shows the representation of life. Therefore, we used comparative method to compare the dramas entitled "Keely and Du" by Jane Martin and "Aborsi" by Subrata Kalape to know the different preception of abortion in America and Indonesia.

The authors are interested to prove about the abortion which are discussed and deliberately shown by the two dramas as the evidence that the abortion in America is

permitted and depends on the decisions of the individuals who want to implement it, on the contrary of abortion in Indonesia which is a very forbidden thing to do.

III. Result and Discussion

A. Abortion in America reflected in “Keely and Du” drama

“Keely and Du” is a drama written by Jane Martin in 1993. Jane Martin is a pen name of a playwright who has been active from 1981 to the present. The real identity of him or her is unknown. Jane Martin has been a long time collaborator with Jon Jory who has directed all of Martin’s plays, one of them is “Keely and Du”. The casts of the drama “Keely and Du” were Julie Boyd, Anne Pitoniak, Bob Burus, and J. Ed Araiza. “Keely and Du” was given its professional world premiere at Actors Theatre of Louisville during the 17th annual Humana Festival of New American Plays, March 1993.

There are many works of Jane Martin which represent social life, for instance “Keely and Du”. It illustrates the condition of America in the 1990s which discusses the abortion as a great issue. Abortion in America in the 1990s was a controversial issue because a number of abortions in 1980 has remained relatively stable. However, the ratio of abortions started in 1990 has declined. Therefore, Jane Martin wrote this drama as a proof which shows that abortion depends on individual decision. Jane Martin illustrates the individual decision of abortion by showing *Keely* as the main character who does abortion in the end of the drama.

“Keely and Du” tells about a pregnant widow, Keely, who has been raped by her ex-husband. Her ex-husband is a violent man with bad behaviors which make Keely does not want to have a baby from him, so that she makes a decision to kill her fetus before born. Knowing the plan of Keely, the Operation Retrieval which is a group of Christian belief try to save the baby by kidnapping Keely. As long as she has been kidnapped, a Catholic nun named Du takes care of her. Du takes care of her by giving her a dress on her birthday. Du is the one who feeds and changes Keely's outfit. At the beginning, Keely always throws away the food given by Du, but as time passes their

relationship gets closer because of the attention Du gives to Keely,. Amid Keely and Du's closeness, Walter tries to bring Cole, Keely's ex-husband, to Keely. Walter assumed that Cole has changed from his rude and grumpy manner. Cole tries to ask Keely to make peace, but Keely, who still feels the deepest hatred of the rape scene is so badly done, does not want to reunite with Cole. Remembering what happened to Cole, Keely remembers the dress Du has given her on her birthday. Therefore, Keely decided to kill the fetus using a hanger on the dress. Keely wants to show that she does not want a child from a bad man.

Keely's decision to kill his son is based on various reasons. Keely really loves her fetus, so she does not want his son gets violence from his father Cole when her fetus grows up later. Limited economic circumstance is also the reason that she does not want the baby to live miserably because she also has to work to meet the needs of her and her father who is sick. Keely's reasons and decisions to perform an abortion described by Jane Martin in the Keely and Du drama became the picture of the society in America. Jane Martin's perception of abortion in the drama "Keely and Du" shows that abortion is permitted in the United States. Although there are small groups that try to keep the baby without having an abortion.

B. Abortion in Indonesia reflected in "Aborsi" drama

"Aborsi" by Subrata Kalape is a drama that was first performed in LPKK Serapo building, Tenggara, East Kalimantan. "Aborsi" drama is presented by college students from Bandung namely Ajiw, Ugi, and Cyntia, and Subrata Kalape as the director and Artaker Arranger and Armakassar as the Sound Arranger.

According to the man who is often called Brata, "Aborsi" which created in 1998 is an expression of anxiety about the condition of the Indonesian nation at the time. If we watch the drama, we could not find any abortion scene or the process of abortion by a pregnant woman, but the scenes which are played portrayed the reality of the Indonesian people since the struggle of reformation by the Indonesian college students in 1998. There are three symbols in this drama, that is to say a pregnant woman as a

symbol of Indonesia, then the process of pregnancy as a system, and a baby conceived as a symbol of society.

From the drama "Aborsi", it can be seen that the people in Indonesia are strongly opposed of abortion. It is a taboo if abortion is made as the material on literary works. The public perception is supported by Articles in the Criminal Code which clearly do not allow an abortion in Indonesia which are contained in the Article 341 and Article 342. In those articles, abortion is considered as of killing a child. Unlike the Health Act No.36 of 2009 on abortion, which explains that media workers are allowed to have legal abortions in pregnant women for medical reasons with the consent of the woman in question with her husband and family. Due to the differences of the laws, it affects the society's perception of the pros and cons of abortion that are delivered through literary works. Due to these differences, the "Aborsi" drama was made according to the public's perception of abortion which is not allowed in Indonesia although the Health Act allows.

C. Different preception of abortion in America and Indonesian

In the drama "Keely and Du" there are some scenes which explain that Keely wants to have an abortion. Keely does not want to have a child in her womb because of her family's economic condition, even because the child in her birth was a child from the raped case. Abortion in the drama "Keely and Du" there are some obvious scene through stage direction in the 16th and 17th scenes

"Who the hell are you? Screw you people. I'm not a goddamn teenager. You are not God. I want an abortion"

"How the hell do you think I am going to do that, huh? You knew I was pregnant, you knew I was raped, do you know I take care of my dad? Do you know he's paralyzed? Do you know I hold his bedpan? Is that part of what you know? Do you know I work to jobs? Do you know what they are?"

"Walter and DU take him out. Without hesitation, Keely reaches under the mattress and pull out the wire hanger her dress had hung on. She brings it up to

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her cuffed hand and untwisted the hanger, straightening it out. She pulls the seat over herself, puts the wire under the seat with her free hand and works to abort herself. It goes on. The lights go down”

“... It it minutes later. The bed seat covering Keely is soaked with fresh blood. Keely lies still; she has pass out...”

and the dialog spoken by Walter

“She’s aborted”

Those scenes tell that the abortion was done based on Keely's decision. Keely is not jailed for having an abortion, instead she is imprisoned because Du and her husband, Walter, were kidnapping Keely on the basis of their good intentions to avoid Keely for having an abortion. This is the evidence which explains that abortion in America is not strictly prohibited.

Unlike the drama "Abortion" by Subrata Kalape. If in the drama "Keely and Du" there are many obvious scenes but in the drama "Abortion" the meaning of the drama is implicitly conveyed. As already explained that abortion is a sensitive issue in Indonesia so that only a bit of literary works like drama about abortion. The drama "Abortion" is even used abortion as the title, but the contain is not about abortion. For example, the scene of the succession of national leadership is drawn through the will of the passengers to replace the captain of the ship that is threatened drowning. In addition, there is also a scene about the depicting military action against the regions in Indonesia. In Indonesia there are already laws regulating tenor of abortion in the Criminal Code and Health Act no. 36 of 2009, although the law provides that abortion is permitted under certain circumstances and with the consent of some parties but the people in Indonesia generally still do not accept abortion. Abortion in Indonesia is considered as an act of murder a baby and is not in accordance with religious norms. Therefore the difference is very visible from the contents of both dramas in America and Indonesia.

The American drama entitled "Keely and Du" very clearly describes the act of abortion by Keely's character because it is a decision she takes. While the Indonesian drama entitled "Abortion" which has very clearly written the title of abortion on the title of the drama, but it does not incase abortion in the drama. This can be attributed to the perception of the community that is influenced by the very strong religious norms in Indonesia. In America, society in general does have religions. However, as the times of the American age, cultures and lifestyles in America affect their religious value. Therefore, the drama "Keely and Du" is not a thing that is forbidden to be staged even a teaching material in the literature department in America. While in Indonesia, the drama "Abortion" is staged as a form of nationalism. It would be a controversy if the drama "Abortion" shows a real abortion scene, and talks abortion outright to the audience. Because the religious values which exist in Indonesia since the first time have been embedded very thickly, the public will be more focus at everything from the side of religion. If in the American, the cultures influence their religious values, on the contrary to that in Indonesia where religion greatly affects the cultures and lifestyles of its society.

IV. Conclusion

Drama is a representation of life. A Drama entitled "Keely and Du" by Jane Martin and "Abortion" by Subrata Kalape is the representation of the peoples in the two countries, America and Indonesia. The both dramas talk about abortion, but convey the context of abortion with different concepts. The concept of abortion in each different country represents the public perception of abortion. The perception is based on different cultures. The different perception between Indonesian people who say abortion is not permitted and that the American society who says that abortion is not a problem can lead to a new difference opinion. Indonesian people consider that abortion cases in America is wrong, while the American society think that Indonesian society is a rigid society for prohibiting the existence of abortion. The differences perception occur because of differences in culture in both countries that can serve as cross cultural understanding for the people of America and Indonesia.

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